

**MINUTES**  
**UNITED TENNESSEE VETERANS ASSOCIATION (UTVA)**  
**March 5, 2013**

Please view video stream

[http://tnga.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=175&clip\\_id=5678](http://tnga.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=175&clip_id=5678)

**SPEAKERS**

Representative Karen Camper, Chair Legislative Veterans Caucus  
Vicki Kendrick, Interim Network Director VISN 9  
Edna MacDonald, Director VA Regional Office

**UTVA MEMBERS PRESENT**

Kathy Bell, Women Veterans of America  
Mary Ross, Women Veterans of America  
Barry Rice, Vietnam Veterans of America  
Fred Poe, Air Force Sergeants Association  
Warren G. King, Sr., American Ex-Prisoners of War  
Mary Lee Fielder, American Ex-Prisoners of War  
Curtis Hudson, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Bill Crawford, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Frank Forbes, Disabled American Veterans  
Ralph Land, Vietnam Veterans of America  
George Martin, AMVETS

**TDVA STAFF PRESENT**

Many-Bears Grinder, Commissioner  
Mark Breece, Assistant Commissioner - West  
Yvette Martinez, Assistant Commissioner of Outreach and Communications  
Roger Harrell, Director of Claims  
Colin Lewis, Legislative Liaison

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 1 p.m., Commissioner Grinder took Roll Call and called the meeting to order with a welcome to everyone.

**PROCEEDINGS**

Commissioner Grinder announced that the meeting would conclude by 2:30 p.m. in order to vacate the Hearing Room for another meeting. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were led by Assistant Commissioner Mark Breece.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made, seconded and carried to approve minutes of the previous meeting.

## **BRIEFINGS**

Veterans Caucus: Representative Karen Camper, Chairman of the Legislative Veterans Caucus stated that the Legislative Veterans Caucus was organized two years ago as a non-partisan and non-political organization with a vision to work on legislation to benefit Veterans. The Caucus has a goal to put together a comprehensive legislative package together to bring before the General Assembly in 2014. The Caucus will hold hearings in each grand division of the state with Veterans and Veteran Service Organizations during 2013 in order to determine the issues which will be included in the legislative package for 2014.

Representative John Ragan, Vice Chair of the Legislative Veterans Caucus announced that Veterans Courts legislation will be brought up next week in a Resolution rather than a bill, due to a fiscal note issue.

VISN 9: Vicki Kendrick, Interim Director, VISN 9 presented update and video. (see attached video)

VA Regional Office: Edna MacDonald, Director, VA Regional Office presented update. (see attached)

## **TDVA UPDATES AND REMARKS**

Sequestration: Commissioner Grinder stated we are happy that the USDVA is exempt from the sequestration, as reported by Director MacDonald today.

Women Veterans Summit: Commissioner Grinder announced the Women Veterans Summit in April at Opryland noting that sponsorship forms are available. She stated that VFW and DAV have already committed and she knows that other service organizations will support as they can.

Vietnam Veterans Proclamation Presentation: Details were announced of the Governor's ceremonial signing of the Vietnam Veterans Proclamation to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. The ceremony which will include Barry Rice, President TN State Council of the Vietnam Veterans of America will be on the Legislative Plaza on Monday, March 25 at 2 p.m. Also, an advisory will be coming out announcing the mobile TN Vietnam Wall will be on the Plaza that week.

Montgomery County TN State Veterans Home Groundbreaking: A huge milestone announcement was made by the Commissioner that we will break ground for the Montgomery County State Veterans Home in Clarksville on May 17. The Governor included \$4.3 million in his budget for this project. Though the House and Senate still need to approve, passage looks favorable.

Best of the Best Nursing Homes: A huge recognition goes to Ed Harries and our TN State Veterans Homes for two out of three of our State Veterans Homes (Murfreesboro and

Knoxville) named by US News and World Report for the Best Homes among nursing homes all over the country.

Unclaimed Veteran Remains: There's a problem throughout our country with funeral directors storing unclaimed remains on their shelves due to liability concerns and no next of kin. Last April Governor Haslam signed into law legislation that would allow funeral directors to inter the remains of those unclaimed Veterans and our cemeteries will bury them at no charge. Also, in January the President signed the Dignitary and Other Veterans Improvements Act of 2012. We are beginning a vigorous information campaign to make sure our funeral directors are aware that we are willing and want to take care of these Veteran remains. VSOs are encouraged to assist by providing honor guard teams to Military Funeral Honors and by attending funerals.

TDVA Legislation: Our department had legislation introduced to clarify language in the TCA so that we are not limited to one cemetery in each grand division; also, the legislation will clean up language similar to UTVA Articles of Agreement which referenced the House-Senate Joint Select Committee for Veterans Affairs, which no longer exists.

Colin Lewis, Legislative Liaison: Reported department tracking of the following Veteran legislation - SR10/HR25 (commercial license for Veterans); SR 208/HR123 (in-state tuition for new Veteran residents); SR493/HR422 (Veteran temporary relief for professional license); SR956/HR445 (Veteran handgun permits).

### **ANNOUNCEMENT**

George Martin, AMVETS, announced events: State Executive Council meeting on March 8-9, 2013; Annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser, April 20, 2013; and National Convention in Memphis in August 2014.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was a second reading on an amendment to the UTVA Articles of Agreement (Section III, Item C.) that changes membership representation from "8" organizations to "at least half of" the organizations be required for a quorum. A motion was made, seconded and the amendment was voted on and passed.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Frank Forbes, DAV, announced he handed out the Quarterly Report for DAV activities for HSC/DSO Patient Transportation Program. It is posted on the website but he has additional information on the 2012 DAV volunteer hours and volunteer miles which he requested to be posted. Assistant Commissioner Martinez requested he email said information and she will post on our website.

Barry Rice, President, TN State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America, announced the national Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Parade and events in Pigeon Forge April 15-17. The parade is at 1 p.m. on April 16.

#### **FUTURE MEETING**

Next meeting will be Tuesday, June 4 at Legislative Plaza. Mt. Home VAMC will be presenting.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Yvette Martinez, TDVA Assistant Commissioner, asked that reports be emailed to her so they can be posted on TDVA website. She also introduced Sgt Major Tim Coop, Wounded Warriors.

Sgt Major Tim Coop, Wounded Warriors, reported his office has been located in the Nashville area since last September and his staff serves 1200 Wounded Warriors in Tennessee and Kentucky. Their mission is to help Wounded Warriors with post 9/11 transition, offering job placement assistance, outreach program, housing and financial services. Bill Crawford, VFW, encouraged them to become a member of UTVA.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made and seconded for adjournment at 2:30 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Many-Bears Grinder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Many-Bears Grinder, Executive Officer  
United Tennessee Veterans Association

March 11, 2013